

B

The Fresno Bee
Sunday, June 14, 2009
fresnobee.com

Local & State

Bicycle Master Plan Outreach Meetings

- **Wednesday:** Fresno City Hall, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
- **Thursday:** Sunnyside High School, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- **June 23:** Malloch Elementary School, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Cyclist pumps for better bike trails in city

Bryan Jones rides a bike — and has a scar on his forehead to prove it.

A car cut him off, he grabbed the brakes and flipped over the handlebars.

That was years ago.

Now he's a Fresno city traffic engineer and bent on making our town more bike and pedestrian friendly.

Don't bet against him.

Thanks to the Measure C transportation tax extension, Fresno has about \$25 million to spend on trails,

bike lanes and safety education over 20 years — plus other money the city might obtain through grants.

"We want to create a comprehensive system of bike lanes and trails to encourage and enhance the cycling

experience in Fresno," says Jones, a graduate of UC Davis, where bikes are as mandatory as term papers.

"Even if someone rides a bike just 20 times a year, they're lightening car traffic and cleaning the air."

To receive Measure C help, the city must complete a bicycle master plan by 2012. The effort begins with three outreach meetings over the next two weeks in which people can voice their opinions.

"We want to identify the routes that people use," Jones says. "Cyclists think differently than motorists on their commutes. They're looking for streets where there is less traffic, lower speeds and more bicycle facilities."

Jones acknowledges that getting around Fresno on a bike can be a joy — or a headache — depending on the part of town you're riding.

"Most of our newer streets, those built in the last 20 years, have bike lanes installed on them," Jones says.

But there also are streets with bikes lanes that end suddenly, and dangerous intersections that should be avoided: "Our focus is on connecting the gaps," he says.

Jones disagrees with people who contend that bike riding isn't a realistic alternative to the car because of Fresno's hot summers. He points out that commuting by bike is popular in Sacramento and Tucson, which also have scorching summers.

"Most of our months are ideal for cycling," Jones says. "Fresno is flat, making it easy to ride. On short trips, when you consider the time it takes to park a car, there's not much difference between riding and driving."

So, what does Jones see in the years ahead?

The return of "bicycle rodeos" at which kids learn bike safety. Moms and dads riding bikes to school with their children instead of using cars, reducing street congestion. More bike racks placed at the front of businesses. Encouraging cyclists to ride

lightly traveled streets with upgraded bike lanes. And here's my favorite: Building miles of biking and pedestrian trails alongside canals.

Jones doesn't buy the argument of local irrigation districts that such trails would be dangerous because children might fall into the water and drown.

People already are using Fresno canals, he says, and many cities in California have turned the land adjacent to their waterways into trails. Some examples: the Delta De Anza Trail in Pittsburg, Marsh Creek Trail in Brentwood and the Turlock Irrigation District Trail.

"Trails have become a quality of life issue," Jones says. "We have lots of opportunities to increase the quality of life for all Fresnoans with all of our waterways."

If you can't make one of the hearings, you can have a say in Fresno's biking future by filling out a short biking survey before July 1 at www.fresnobmp.com.

► The columnist can be reached at bmcewen@fresnobee.com or (559) 441-6632. Check out his blog at fresnobeehive.com.

✦



**BILL
McEWEN**